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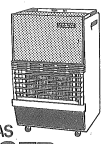

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WYCOMBE'S PLUCK IS NO MATCH FOR WATFORD'S CLASS

Experiment Fails In Giant-Killer Bid

A CROWD of 24,000, including an estimated Wycombe following of close on 8,000, saw Wycombe Wanderers go down, fighting gallantly, against superior professional opposition, in their first-ever F.A. Cup second round appearance against Fourth Division Watford at Watford on Saturday.

The Wycombe selectors' experiment of changing both the wing men — a move which caused heated controversy among supporters—failed to impart any marked additional punch in the Wanderers' forward line, which was subdued for much of the game by the wily Watford defence.

PROFESSIONALS IN COMMAND IN F.A. CUP CLASH

By Argus

Watford 5; Wycombe Wan. 1

BRAVE amateur hearts were no substitute for professional class at Vicarage-road, Watford, on Saturday. A record-breaking 23,907 crowd cheered Wycombe Wanderers' enthusiasm to the echo, but when it came to cool, calculated soccer skill and controlled power there was only one team in it—Fourth Division Watford.

Mr. Ron Burgess' so-cool, so-strong so-confident team had all the trump cards—supercharged thrust at wing half; slim wizard Barry Hartle, a conjuring demon of an inside forward to mark; tough-as-nails centre-half Vince McNeice and goal-hungry forwards Dennis Uphill and £10,000 Cliff Holton.

Against these talents one Wycombe man stood out like the Beachy Head lighthouse on a stormy night—young John Beck who played a "dream" game at right-back, surely his best-ever performance for the club.

APPRECIATION

All the Wanderers boys ran their legs off in the quest for cup glory but it was Beck's competence and canny handling of the skilful Watford outside-left Freddie Bunce which had even the match-hardened Fleet Street critics clucking with appreciation.

For two minutes only did fighting-all-the-time Wanderers have a real chance of a "giant-killer." In the 20th minute a Dennis Atkins free-kick made Watford fans gulp with alarm as it crashed into the head of Jimmy Linton's not to equalise an earlier Uphill goal.

Then, within a few seconds, came the one-and-only opportunity to shake the cocky pros off their perch. Paul Bates, in a flash of Wybosch form, left McNeice gasping behind him on the right wing, beat another man on the line and centered across a stricken Watford goalmouth. Tragically, none of the Wycombe forwards within whispering distance were quick enough to whip the ball in and a Watford defender was able to smack the ball away.

With this escape behind them Watford quickly strangled the life out of the resistance out of the amateurs. Once Uphill and Holton had shot them into a two-goal lead it was really only a question of how many the professionals would win by. Just like a good, lazy heavyweight, Watford turned on the steam whenever they felt like it and when they did Wycombe's plucky defence had no answer.

Superior in all phases of the game, Watford had a centre-forward in Uphill who could snap up half chances in the grand manner, and he was the real match-winner.

Chasing hard and often to bolster a highly-suspect Wycombe defence, John Fraser joined Beck as the best of the Wycombe rearguard. There was any amount of covering to do. Watford inside men Holton and Hartle had the beating of Ron Fryer and Jim Truett throughout the game, while Jimmy Moring gave far too much room to Mike Benning, who ran the Watford right wing as if his name was Pigalle Wonder.

"IFFY" DENNIS

Added to these trouble-spots, Dennis Syrett looked nervous and was at fault with two of the Watford goals and extremely lucky to get away with at least one first half escapade.

Critics of the Wycombe wing choice could be excused for a certain "I told you so" attitude. There was never an effective challenge to Watford's goal from either flank.

Gallantly though he played, Gerald Free was "lost" in this company and just hadn't the know-how and experience to cope with full-back Price while Dennis Atkins, who replaced Michael Rockell on the right wing, could only find one of the Thor-fashioned shots in his armoury and, this apart, did very little

ONE MAN FORCE

Pick of the Wycombe forwards were Paul Bates, who was forced to roam wide by the attentive McNeice, and Cliff Trott, a one-man invasion force in the second half.

The Wanderers began splendidly, wing halves racing into attack with the forwards, the ball moving sweetly towards the Watford goal. Then a ninth-minute goal by Uphill shattered the illusion and brought the Wanderers' supporters back to earth.

As swift as a dagger, Hartle side-stepped and dummied past two Wycombe defenders and his final pass left Uphill clear to smash a bandsman's drive past Syrett.

The fantastic Uphill—manager Burgess disclosed after the game that he was still shaking off a stomach disorder—sent yet another blistering shot over the Wanderers' crossbar from the touchline.

Enough, two-footed tackling by the Watford defenders had the referee whistling persistently as Wycombe began to press. Bates was left winded and writhing on the ground after one tackle by McNeice and another home foul preceded the equalising goal. Atkins' mighty free-kick taught Watford a lesson as it knocked Linton's fingers back en route to the net.

The professionals made hay of Wycombe's defence in the 20 minutes immediately before half-time. Holton hit a cracking drive into Syrett's arms and Uphill missed a sit-up-and-beg chance after the goalkeeper had dropped the ball. Cliff Holton swept the ball round Syrett and then rolled the ball wide of an open goal—and then Wycombe had their biggest let-off, when Benning cracked a shot against a post and a thankful goalkeeper grabbed the rebound

QUICK GOALS

A beautiful header by Uphill and a solo dribble by Holton saw the two Watford goals in three minutes, just before half-time.

Wycombe hopes of a recovery were soon shot down in flames by an incredible goal from Vince McNeice. The Watford centre-half shied the ball hopefully goalwards and saw it sail over the head of the surprised Syrett.

With a three-goal lead Watford went on the soft pedal and the Wanderers were allowed to hustle away, chiefly through the intrepid Trott. But the nearest they went to scoring was when Free's centre was kicked off the goal-line by full back Nicholas.

HOLTON CRACKERJACK

Two penalties in the final ten minutes saw the end of the scoring. Sammy Chung whipped Bates' legs from under him in the home penalty area but Paul sent a tame spot-kick almost straight at Linton.

Not so, Cliff Holton. When the Watford giant was given a last minute pot at goal, after Fryer had fouled him in the Wycombe area, he hammered the fastest shot of the game past Syrett.

Not a goal conceded

By STUART EARP

IT all began on September 15 when Wycombe Wanderers made the arduous trip down to the docks at Tilbury. It was here that the Blues started their F.A. Cup run with a 3-0 victory — perhaps the best performance in the Cup this term.

Wycombe were faced by a Tilbury side that was sitting on top of the Rothmans Isthmian League Division 2 (Wycombe were fourth in Division 1) and full of confidence. Wanderers were hardly feeling on top of the world. Only three days previous they had been well and truly thrashed at Walton and Hersham 4-1.

For what manager Brian Lee described as their "toughest game yet", Wanderers welcomed back John Maskell and Steve Perrin and these two gave the side the boost they needed.

Man of the match, though, had to be Mick Holifield. It was Mick who put Wycombe on the road to victory with two first half goals, the first a real gem. Keith Searle got the better of big centre-half Norman Welch and scored the third goal to make sure of a place in round two.

Here they met fellow league club Woking. A quirk in the fixtures meant the two teams met at Loakes Park on the Tuesday before the cup match, resulting in a critical 3-2 success for Wycombe. Only a last minute penalty by Tony Horseman sealed the points and so an even encounter was expected three days later.

It was not to be. Despite another excellent display of goalkeeping by Dave Collyer, who incidentally was chaired off by admiring home fans at the end of the match, the Blues eased home with a Keith Searle goal in the 14th minute.

The crowd at Loakes Park was some 2,000 strong and they saw Wycombe dominate the game for virtually all of the 90 minutes.

The Cup draw the following Monday paired Wanderers away to Chatham Town. Little was known about the Kent League side, except that they were semi-professional. It looked ominous.

Few could have expected the final outcome on October 20. The scoreline was no mistake — Chatham Town 0, Wycombe Wanderers 7. After the first half an hour there was little doubt about the outcome, and by half-time Steve Perrin (2), Tony Horseman and Larry Pritchard, had shot Wanderers into a commanding 4-0 lead.

Two more by Keith Searle and another Horseman goal completed the rout. It was difficult to assess Wycombe's performance. How much was it down to their own skill or just how weak were their opponents?

I think it was a mixture of both. Wycombe undoubtedly played some of the best soccer of the season but Chatham looked little better than a Hellenic League side. Highlight of the tie was Pritchard's goal just before half-time. The Wycombe skipper ran half the length of the field, beating several defenders before shooting home. A crowd of 1,102 watched the game.

When the fourth round draw was announced, Wycombe must have fancied their chances of a place in the first round proper for the first time since 1970-71 when they met Slough Town. The draw saw Wanderers away to Worthing, a club from the Athenian League.

About eight coach-loads of Wycombe fans made the trip down to Sussex and after a slow start to the match, they were rewarded with three goals, all in the second half. It was here that superior fitness won the day. Worthing tired badly under pressure in the second half and Steve Perrin paved the way for victory with a superb drive from some 20 yards. Pritchard made it 2-0 and Holifield added a third.

So there it was then. Wycombe Wanderers in the first round proper again — and for the last time as Amateurs. It is noticeable that the Blues have yet to concede a goal in the F.A. Cup this term. Can they repeat the feat tomorrow?

REPLAY SET FOR TUESDAY

IF a replay is necessary after tomorrow's (Saturday) F.A. Cup tie between Wycombe Wanderers and Newport, it will be staged on Tuesday at Newport with a 2 o'clock kick off.

The reason for the early start is because of the ban on floodlighting. Half an hour of extra time will be played if needed.

Wycombe supporters wishing to make the trip should either contact Mr. Reg. Johnson after tomorrow's game or should buy tickets from Jeffways Travel in Castle Street. The coaches leave Lily's Walk at 9 a.m.

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'Feared in the South' — then we lost 5-1!

WHEN our Sports Editor, Stuart Earp, asked me if I would like to contribute to this feature I was delighted. Let's face it we all like to reminisce.

I hope the following will give many faithful supporters pleasure and enable them to relive the last encounters between Wycombe Wanderers and professional league sides.

The match at Northampton in 1958 was played in front of a crowd of some 10,000 and on a very heavy pitch. One could not accuse the crowd of being partisan for at least 50 per cent were from Wycombe. And most certainly made their presence felt at the Wanderers players, as indeed they always do.

The pitch itself was perfectly flat being part of the outfield of the Northampton cricket ground, regrettably this meant that the majority of the spectators were on three sides only, and I don't think any player enjoys this, for it takes away some of the atmosphere.

As for the match itself, bearing in mind it took place some 15 years ago, I remember few specific instances. I do remember that it was a hard game in the mud with the Wanderers players lasting as well as their professional opponents. The general consensus of opinion then was that the Blues had not deserved to lose.

My own impression was that we had played well enough to win, but (and doesn't it still happen today) we had not taken our chances.

For many of the XI who had played that day it was their first experience of playing against a league side in a competitive game, an experience we all enjoyed, except the result.

The following year, as a result of another good run we found ourselves drawn away to Watford, who were then a division IV side. This game had a much more local flavour, with one of our team, Denis Atkins, having his employer on the Watford Board of Directors.

In our preparation for this match we had been fortunate to watch our opponents in their replay with Cheltenham Town. So we thought we were a little wiser as to their prowess.

We also had the B.B.C. sports crew down to watch us in training and to talk to us about our thoughts on the game. I remember telling the interviewer I thought our chances were very good, we were a strong side, feared in the south in the Amateur game, and could call upon many experienced players under the managership of Sid Cann.

When I saw myself on the "box" on Friday evening my immediate thought was "doesn't that sound corny!"

And the result the next day, a 5-1 defeat, brought me many amusing letters and notes from 'friends'.

As to the game itself there is no doubt we were beaten by the professional "know-how." Although their last two goals came in the final ten minutes, they were always that little bit quicker than we on the ball, and harder in the tackle.

I do remember the size of the crowd, some 24,000, and I am sure many clubs would like to see that kind of attendance in the early F.A. Cup rounds now.

In recalling these two games I would like to remind you of the names of some of the players involved who in their turn gave such service to the Wanderers and enjoyment to supporters. Denis Syrett, Denis Atkins, Paul Bates, Jack Tomlin, John Beck, Ron Fryer, John Fisher, Fred Lawson, Jim Truett, Ray Howson, Gerry Free.

By JIM MORING

JIM MORING played o ver 300 matches for Wycombe Wanderers during a spell of 10 years with the club from 1950-60. He played in both F.A. Cup games against Northampton and Watford and captained the Blues in his last three years with the club.

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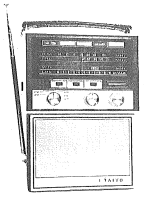

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